

Message Text

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ACTION EUR-12

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ALL OTHER CANADIAN POSTS (BY POUCH)

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EO 11652: N/A
TAGS: PGOV, CA
SUBJECT: RECENT COMMENTS BY TRUDEAU MAY PORTEND CURTAIL-
MENT OF BILINGUALISM PROGRAM

REF: WINNIPEG 137

1. DURING RECENT WESTERN SWING, PM TRUDEAU MAY HAVE
BURIED SPIRIT OF FEDERAL BILINGUALISM PROGRAM ON THE
PRAIRIES. SPEAKING IN WINNIPEG APRIL 19 (REFTEL) AND
FOLLOWING DAY IN SASKATCHEWAN, TRUDEAU TOOK SPECIAL PAINS
TO ASSURE WESTERN AUDIENCES THAT "BILINGUALISM" HAD BEEN
INCORRECTLY UNDERSTOOD. IT IS NOT, HE ASSERTED, A
CAMPAIGN TO JAM FRENCH DOWN THROATS OF ANGLOPHONES BUT
ONLY AN EFFORT TO ASSURE THAT A FRANCOPHONE SHOULD BE
ABLE TO ADDRESS FEDERAL GOVERNMENT IN HIS OWN LANGUAGE
(FRENCH). "I'M NOT ASKING FOR ANYTHING MORE THAN THAT",
HE SAID IN SASKATCHEWAN. IN WINNIPEG SPEECH, HE TOOK
POINT FURTHER NOTING THAT BILINGUALISM WOULD "HELP MAKE
IT POSSIBLE FOR THE VAST MAJORITY OF CANADIANS NOT TO
HAVE TO SPEAK A SECOND LANGUAGE MORE OFTEN -- AND NEVER
HAVE TO SPEAK A SECOND LANGUAGE AT ALL, IF THAT IS THEIR
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WISH".

2. COMMENT: TRUDEAU REMARKS, WHICH OBVIOUSLY A PITCH TO
BIASES -- OR PERCEIVED BIASES OF WESTERN AUDIENCES,
CONSTITUTE MAJOR STEP BACKWARDS FROM PREVIOUS THRUST OF
FEDERAL GOVERNMENT BILINGUALISM EFFORT. SO MUCH SO IN
FACT THAT SYNDICATED COLUMNIST RICHARD GWYN HEADLINED

COLUMN ON SUBJECT, "TRUDEAU ABANDONS THE CANADIAN DREAM".

3. OFFICIAL LANGUAGES ACT OF 1968 DID, AS TRUDEAU INDICATED, PROTECT RIGHT OF A FRANCOPHONE TO COMMUNICATE WITH THE FEDERAL GOVERNMENT IN FRENCH. BUT "BILINGUALISM" PROGRAM HAS GONE FAR BEYOND TRAINING ANGLOPHONE CIVIL SERVANTS FOR THIS PURPOSE UNDER THAT ACT. SOME 600 MILLION DOLLARS HAS, FOR EXAMPLE, BEEN EXPENDED SINCE 1970 FOR SECOND-LANGUAGE TRAINING IN SCHOOLS AND MOST RECENT THRONE SPEECH INDICATED INTENTION TO INCREASE FEDERAL EFFORT IN THIS REGARD. SCHOOL TRAINING PROGRAM IS UNDER OVERALL SUPERVISION OF LANGUAGE PROGRAMMES BRANCH OF DEPARTMENT OF SECRETARY OF STATE. ACCORDING TO A RELEASE OF THAT OFFICE, "IT IS THE MAIN PURPOSE OF THIS BRANCH'S PROGRAMMES TO ENCOURAGE THE ACQUISITION AND USE OF THE OFFICIAL LANGUAGES IN CANADIAN SOCIETY, THEREBY REINFORCING THEIR EQUALITY". THIS MANDATE AND EXPENDITURE OF THIS ORDER OF FUNDS HARDLY CONFORM WITH TRUDEAU'S NARROW CONSTRUCTION ON THE PRAIRIES.

4. IT REMAINS TO BE SEEN WHETHER TRUDEAU'S COMMENTS WERE DESIGNED FOR NARROW AND TEMPORARY POLITICAL PURPOSES AND NOT AS A DEATH KNEEL FOR VARIOUS PROGRAMS WHICH ARE DESIGNED TO ENCOURAGE GREATER BILINGUALISM AMONG ORDINARY CITIZENS ACROSS CANADA. OUR ESTIMATE IS THAT THESE PROGRAMS WILL CONTINUE AS BEFORE. IN ANY CASE, HOWEVER, TRUDEAU'S COMMENTS HAVE NOW STRIPPED THEM OF IMPORTANT BACKING AND HAVE SEVERELY DIMINISHED THEIR POTENTIAL EFFECTIVENESS. TRUDEAU HAS, SINCE 1968, BEEN SYNONYMOUS LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

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WITH BILINGUALISM IN ITS BROADEST INTERPRETATION AS A KEY TO UNIFICATION OF THIS COUNTRY. BY EMPHASIZING THE RIGHT OF ALL CANADIANS NOT TO HAVE TO SPEAK TWO LANGUAGES, TRUDEAU HAS NOW PULLED WELL BACK FROM THIS GOAL AND MAY HAVE HELPED DESTROY WHAT GWYN CALLS THE "CANADIAN DREAM" OF A TRULY BILINGUAL COUNTRY. AS GWYN PUTS IT, "WITHOUT THAT DREAM, THOUGH, NOT MUCH IS LEFT -- TWO HOMES, TWO GHETTOS, TWO SOLITUDES". ENDERS

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Message Attributes

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Copy: SINGLE
Sent Date: 26-Apr-1977 12:00:00 am
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Disposition Approved on Date:
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